

African seed system gets a boost with purchase of 18-ton trucks to ease quality seed delivery to farmers

On 7 August, [IITA GoSeed](#), in Ibadan and Umudike Seeds based at the [National Root Crops Research Institute \(NRCRI\)](#), Umuahia, jointly commissioned two brand new 18-ton trucks to ease logistical challenges in moving cassava seed. [IITA](#) Director General [Nteranya Sanginga](#) presided over the ceremony at the Agricultural Transformation building of the [CGIAR-IITA](#) headquarters in Ibadan, Nigeria. The trucks were purchased with support from the [Building an Economically Sustainable Integrated Seed System \(BASICS-I\)](#) project.

Cassava has the potential to provide more than twice the amount of food and income it is currently providing to farmers, processors, seed producers, and consumers. The way to maximize the potential of cassava is to strengthen the seed system by ensuring that quality early generation seed of improved varieties is made available to farmers at the right time and quantities. IITA GoSeed was launched under the

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Left: DG Nteranya Sanginga making his remarks during the commissioning. Right: DDG-P4D Kenton Dashiell commissioning the newly acquired trucks.

Digital extension tools thrill dignitaries at annual national farmers' exhibition in Tanzania

The digital extension tools and other technologies developed by [CGIAR-IITA](#) received wide attention in an exhibition at the recently concluded National Farmers' Exhibition in Tanzania. IITA and other stakeholders in the agriculture sector showcased innovative technologies at the annual exhibition, which took place in Simiyu region, northern Tanzania, on 1-8 August. The theme of this year's event was "Agricultural, livestock and fisheries development; choose the best leaders in 2020."



TARI Director General, Dr Geoffrey Mkamilo standing and TARI Board Chairman, Dr Yohane Bulena signing the visitors' book at the IITA exhibition booth.

Various dignitaries who visited IITA's exhibition stand commended the innovations, which aim to address challenges facing agriculture. The Institute's exhibition focused on digital extension tools that aim to support farmers and extension officers to access knowledge, information resources, and technologies needed to achieve success in farming. The tools displayed include the [Cassava Seed Tracker](#), a web-based platform that links cassava seed producers with regulators and farmers; [AKILIMO](#) tools, which provide farmers with agronomic recommendations; and NURU app developed in partnership with Penn State University, USA, which uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to help farmers accurately diagnose important cassava pests and diseases.

The Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Japhet Hasunga and Gerald M. Kusaya, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, were among those who visited the IITA booth. Impressed with the technologies, they hinted about inviting IITA for collaborative talks with the ministry to tackle some of the principal challenges facing farmers.

The AKILIMO decision support tools and NURU app impressed another visitor, Tanzania's Attorney General, Prof Adelardus Kilangi, who is also a cassava farmer. He said he would use these to extend his farm size to 100 acres.

Other visitors included Geoffrey Mkamilo and Yohana Budeba, the General Director

and Board Chairman, Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI); the Hon. Hussein Bashe, and Hon. Mwita Waitara, Assistant Ministers of Agriculture and Foreign Affairs, respectively, and Gabriel Rugalema, Director, World Vegetable Center, Eastern and Southern Africa. Also, hundreds of farmers, students, researchers, and private sector players visited the stand.

Country Coordinator of the [African Cassava Agronomy Initiative](#) (ACAI) and acting Country Representative, Freddy Bijukya, led the IITA team on behalf of Eastern Africa Hub.

Other technologies showcased by IITA included [AflasafeTZ](#), the effective biocontrol product that reduces aflatoxin contamination in maize and groundnut by 80 to 90%. IITA Tanzania Youth Agripreneurs were also present and highlighted their activities in attracting youth to agriculture, their various agribusinesses, and their products.

Other members of the IITA team included Bahati Maregeri, Assistant Projects Manager with the Building Capacity for Resilient Food Security Project; Veronica Kebwe, chair of the Tanzania Youth Agripreneurs; and Mzanda Abubakar of ACAI. Neema Mbilinyi and Juma Yabeja, under the Building an Economically-Sustainable Seed System in Tanzania for Cassava (BEST Cassava), showcased the NURU app and the Cassava Seed Tracker, respectively.



Top: Veronica Kebwe, Chair of the Tanzania Youth Agripreneurs explaining the group's activities and products to visitors. Bottom: IITA staff with the Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Japhet Hasunga and the Permanent Secretary Minister of Agriculture, Mr Gerald Kusaya.



You are invited!

The Tenth Annual Summit of the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) will be held virtually on 8–11 September 2020 and will be co-hosted by the Government of Rwanda and the AGRF Partners Group.

Participation is free. Please register ASAP using this link: <https://agrforum.org/summit/catalog/course/agrforum-virtual-summit-2020>. IITA and partners are organizing two partner events on 7 September: the launch of the Excellence in Agronomy 2030 platform, 3-4:45 pm; and Agriculture Technologies for Feeding Cities (TAAT), 5-6.30 pm, Rwanda time (UTC +2).

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BASICS-I project to handle the production and commercial sale of certified early generation cassava seed.

Speaking at the event, DG Sanginga congratulated IITA GoSeed Vegetative Manager, [Mercy Elohor Diebiru-Ojo](#), and the entire IITA GoSeed team for the progress made in distributing quality seed, especially during the current COVID-19 crisis. "I can only be proud of GoSeed and IITA," he said.

IITA Deputy Director General Partnerships for Delivery [Kenton Dashiell](#) commissioned the trucks with the DG. Dashiell appreciated the BASICS I and II projects for extending the use of the trucks to transport seed and planting materials of all IITA mandate crops after RTB Project Management Officer, [Richard Ofei](#) had mentioned that the use of the trucks is not limited to transporting cassava alone. "This is for the benefit

of African agriculture as farmers can easily get access to good seed," Dashiell said.

IITA GoSeed's partnership with the BASICS I project continues into BASICS II. GoSeed is also open for partnership to help provide quality and improved varieties of seed to seed companies and farmers. To collaborate and learn more about IITA GoSeed, visit www.iitagoseed.com.



The GoSeed team standing before the trucks.

Take responsibility! Stop the spread of COVID-19!

Wash your hands regularly with soap and water; practice physical and social distancing; wear face masks; avoid crowds and public places; keep a 2-meter distance from the next person; practice general sanitation and hygiene.

Got a story to share?

Please send your story with photos and captions every Tuesday to iita-news@cgiar.org or Katherine Lopez (k.lopez@cgiar.org) and Uzoma Agha (u.gha@cgiar.org) for headquarters and Western Africa, Catherine Njuguna (c.njuguna@cgiar.org) for Eastern and Southern Africa, and David Ngome (d.ngome@cgiar.org) for Central Africa.



Youth involvement crucial to successful agriculture intervention programs

A study was carried out to evaluate the impact of the N-power Agro program on youth employment and income generation in some parts of rural Nigeria. Adewale Ogunmodede did this research under the [IITA](#)-implemented Enhancing Capacity to Apply Research Evidence (CARE) in Policy for Youth Engagement in Agribusiness and Rural Economic Activities in Africa project, which is sponsored by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The study covered three states in the southwest of Nigeria and explored the state of youth participation in agribusiness activities in rural areas.

Nigeria has the largest youth population in Africa, and yet multiple reports show that the average age of farmers in the country is between 50 and 60 years. The government strategically targets young people to encourage their participation in agriculture and agribusiness because the declining agricultural production is diminishing the hope of attaining food security in the country by 2050.

Looking at the N-Power Agro program, which promotes employment opportunities for youth in the agricultural sector, Ogunmodede explored the regional growth analysis of youth labor and employment trends in Nigeria. He focused on the emergence of agribusinesses while

evaluating the impact of the program to generate income and create employment for the beneficiaries through their participation.

The study revealed that young people involved in agriculture during the production season often take up non-farm jobs to ensure stable income during the off-season.

According to Ogunmodede, Nigeria's agricultural value chain is slowly evolving with limited diversification in an environment that still undermines progress. This situation highlights the need for policies and interventions that will ensure that the youth are actively involved in agriculture all year round to achieve food security.

Despite attempts by the government to improve rural livelihood, provide employment, and ensure food security through agricultural development initiatives, most of these programs have had little or no impact on the lives of the youth. Corruption, inconsistency in policies, and an implementation approach that does not prioritize the grassroots are the main reasons for this failure.

Ogunmodede states, "It is crucial for policy makers to know that policies should target youth as partners and leaders in development. Policy development should be a collaborative intervention that will ensure youth are fully consulted and integrated into the decision-making process."

The study also recommends that the government incorporates the beneficiaries of these initiatives as produce-suppliers to the home-grown school feeding program, and a policy development approach that involves the youth.

[CARE](#) addresses youth unemployment and involvement in rural and non-rural economies by funding young researchers across Africa. The resulting studies are the basis for policy briefs that are used to engage parliamentarians in Africa to ensure that effective policies are drafted to address these development areas.



Youth agripreneurs on a field during land preparation.

National agency to integrate AKILIMO tools into national extension package

Nigeria's [National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services \(NAERLS\)](#) is in talks with the [African Cassava Agronomy Initiative \(ACAI\)](#) project to integrate [AKILIMO](#) into the government extension package in Nigeria. NAERLS is one of the 18 national agricultural research institutes (NARIs) under the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD).

NAERLS is responsible for development, collation, evaluation, and dissemination of proven agricultural innovations as well as research on extension methodologies and policy.

As part of NAERLS's core objectives to adopt the multidisciplinary approach to problem solving, the integration of AKILIMO tools in extension services in Nigeria will ensure the adoption of effective agronomic recommendations in farming practices.

The IITA-implemented ACAI project developed the AKILIMO decision support tools that provide cassava agronomy recommendations to help cassava farmers optimize their production and income from growing cassava. The advice covers several use cases such as tailored fertilizer recommendation for cassava, six steps

to cassava weed management and the best planting practices, intercropping cassava with sweet potato in Tanzania and maize in Nigeria, scheduling cassava planting and harvesting for sustainable and consistent production of cassava, and optimizing the amount and quality of starch in the cassava roots.

NAERLS Assistant Director for Research, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Prof. Christogonus K. Daudu met with ACAI staff, including [Christine Kreye](#), [Theresa Ampadu-Boakye](#), and [Thompson Ogunsanmi](#) to discuss how to integrate AKILIMO into the national extension package. The integration with NAERLS will involve the Federal Department of Agricultural Extension Services (FDAES) of FMARD.

Prof Daudu said the Institute is interested in working with all AKILIMO use cases and recommendations. He pointed out that the agronomy advice for getting the optimum return on investment through intercropping cassava and maize could be a starting point because of an ongoing [AGRA-funded project in Niger and Kaduna states](#).

ACAI and NAERLS also discussed the need for a working group, with members selected from ACAI, NAERLS/FMARD, and NCRI, to review the existing cassava manual and consider how to integrate agronomy advice content from AKILIMO.

More discussion between ACAI and NAERLS included the integration of AKILIMO into the [national helpline](#) and NAERLS website to complement an interactive voice response (IVR) system where farmers make direct calls, which NAERLS resource persons physically operate via text messages.

ACAI is discussing the signing of an agreement with NAERLS in conjunction with other government agencies such as FDAES to facilitate collaboration on developing an agronomy knowledge base and the dissemination of AKILIMO tools. Long-term plans include working on incorporating fertilizer recommendations and other AKILIMO recommendations in the extension agents' advisory pack.



Top: An extension agent conducting yield assesment in a trial plot managed using AKILIMO recommendations. Bottom: AKILIMO tools provide recommendations that help farmers maximize their return on their cassava investments.